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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

27 June 1985
1800 EDT

SPOT COMMENTARY: Update of the TWA Hijacking/Hostage Situation

According to Cable News Network, Israeli television newscasters just announced that Israel and the United States have agreed to release the more than 700 Lebanese prisoners held in Israel once the TWA hostages are released. We have no further details at this time.

This latest development reinforces our guarded optimism that at least the hostages under Barri's control may be released to Syrian custody within a day or two. A persistent sticking point may continue to be whether, in response to Syrian and/or Iranian direction, Hizballah elements will release the four or more TWA hostages they reportedly hold.

Assad wants to resolve the hijacking incident before his trip to Czechoslovakia. Assad currently is scheduled to depart for Prague on 2 July. Syria is willing to take custody of the hostages if an agreement is reached between the US, Amal, and Israel.

The Syrian party newspaper "Al-Ba'th" today featured an editorial which condemned the hijacking in much stronger terms than previously have appeared in Syrian news coverage of the incident. the editorial is probably the closest Syria will come to an official condemnation of the hijacking, at least until the hostages are released. The article also charged that the US is exploiting the incident and raising tension in the region by sending the Nimitz close to the Lebanese coast. The editorial further explains that Syria is helping to resolve the crisis because President Reagan asked for Syrian assistance.

Prepared by:

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